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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0816
INFO RUEHZS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//OSD/ISA/AP//
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS MANILA 001903

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR PM A/S HILLEN, EAP, AND EAP/MTS
USPACOM ALSO FOR FPA HUSO
SECDEF/OSD/ISA/AP FOR ALLEN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [PARM](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: GMA OPTIMISTIC ABOUT MILF PEACE PROSPECTS;
POTENTIAL NEED FOR ASSISTANCE WITH DISARMAMENT

¶1. (U) This message is sensitive, but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

¶2. (SBU) SUMMARY: During an April 28 event with the Ambassador, President Arroyo reiterated optimism about prospects for peace with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) in 2006. Senior GRP officials commented that an effective disarmament program would help the peace process succeed. The Ambassador suggested that President Arroyo raise this issue with Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Hillen during his upcoming visit. END SUMMARY.

¶3. (SBU) On the margins of an April 28 ceremony turning over a refurbished C-130 to the Philippine Air Force (PAF), President Arroyo discussed with the Ambassador prospects for peace with the MILF. Also present were Defense Secretary Cruz, Presidential Advisor for the Peace Process Dureza, Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) Chief of Staff General Senga, PAF Commander Lieutenant General Reyes, Army Chief Lieutenant General Esperon, and JUSMAG Chief Colonel Velasco. President Arroyo stated that the GRP and MILF had made important progress on the issue of ancestral domain, which has been a major hurdle. President Arroyo added that she believed the MILF is ready for peace, and reiterated optimism about prospects of an agreement before the end of ¶2006.

¶4. (SBU) General Senga and Presidential Advisor Dureza commented that, for the peace process to succeed, the GRP had to find a means of buying loose weapons and destroying them. Secretary Cruz and other officials asked about international donor assistance with weapons destruction. Ambassador noted PM's Small Arms/Light Weapons Destruction Program, in which President Arroyo expressed keen interest. The Ambassador suggested the President raise this issue with Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs John Hillen during his upcoming visit to the Philippines.
KENNEY